

# ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY

*Promoting wise management of trees and woods*



About the:

## **RFS Excellence in Forestry Community Forestry Winners 2010.**

### **1st place: Breach Wood, Witney, West Oxfordshire**

Breach Wood, in the village of Hailey, is on the southern margin of what was once the royal hunting forest of Wychwood. It was planned and planted by local people in 2002, with the support of the Wychwood Project, on former agricultural land, and was opened in February 2003 by HRH Prince Charles. The 2.51ha community woodland is owned and managed for the benefit of the people of Hailey by the Hailey Community Woodland Ltd.

Following advice from the Wychwood Project, and with support from the Oxfordshire Woodland Project, it was planted with broadleaved trees that reflect the character of the ancient forest, and includes a number of oaks grown from local acorns by the village's primary school children.

The management of the woodland is guided by what it will look like in 200 years time.

#### ***What the judges said:***

Forestry judges Roderick Leslie and Simon Hewitt said: "The 2.5 hectare Breach wood near Witney is a true community wood: located to link footpaths into a circular walk for villagers. We were constantly greeted by local dog walkers as the Committee showed us round.

"The take of a local Wychwood-based mix of broadleaves has been excellent, with Ash excelling, some good Oak and a wide range of shrubs and native species including Field Maple, Walnut and Wild Cherry. The wood was opened by HRH the Prince of Wales in 2003 and has never looked back, hosting two woodland fairs, a village picnic in the attractive central glade, involving local schools and colleges and events such as moth evenings and dawn chorus walks.

"What impressed us most is that so many people are involved in looking after the wood, with almost all the management work done by local people, including pruning all the trees. Local children refer to it as 'our wood'."

***Breach Wood Trustees said "We are absolutely delighted with this award. We have always worked to put Breach Wood at the heart of the village and have developed strong links with the local primary school and other village groups. We hope this success will encourage more people to get involved in Breach Wood and all that it represents."***



**Pictured:** Community Woodland winners: Hailey Community Woodland members, from left, Sean Morris, Judith Wood and Clare Musson at Breach Wood (Credit: Rod Leslie)

### **2nd place: Westwood Woodland Park, Eastleigh, Hampshire**

Westwood Country Park, in Eastleigh, is very different. The site was established in 1987 by Hampshire County Council. While much of the site is of ancient woodpasture origin, with records back to the 12th century, the core is a well restored ex-landfill site.

It has developed as a patchwork of woodland, grassland and scrub. Hazel coppicing benefits dormice that live there, and the produce is sold as wood fuel, bean and pea sticks which are sold back to the local community via a shop at the Royal Victoria Country Park, where the Countryside Service of Hampshire County Council is based. The area is managed to promote a number of species, including bluebells and Solomon's Seal. Two local schools use Westwood on a regular basis.

#### ***What the judges said:***

Forestry judges Roderick Leslie and Simon Hewitt said: "The wood is on the edge of a towerblock estate with a range of social pressures. This has given Hampshire County Council rangers real and continuing problems and we particularly applaud their courage and persistence in an environment which could easily have killed enthusiasm and commitment.

"Ranger Carly Fretwell's 70-strong volunteer force is working on a range of tasks, including a new FC-funded all ability trail round the 200 acre site. The Park works closely with an exciting children's centre right on its doorstep and hosts a range of students and work experience participants.

"There is, appropriately, no management in the mature wood pasture at present, but the volunteers are actively coppicing hazel, vital for the survival of the Park's Dormouse population."

***Ranger Carly Fretwell said: "It is a great achievement for Westwood to be recognised in this award and really reflects the amount of work the volunteers and local community have put into the woods and how much they are all now cared for. Many of the problems within Westwood have been overcome by the hard work and enthusiasm of the volunteers and local people."***